

John M. and Martha S. Filer House
1508 First Avenue
Fourth Ward Neighborhood
Altoona
Blair County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5822

HABS
PA
7-ALTO
48-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
JOHN M. AND MARTHA S. FILER HOUSE

HABS
PA.
7-ALTO,
48-
HABS No. PA-5822

Location: 1508 1st Avenue

Date of Erection: 1901-02

Description: This two-and-a-half-story, frame house has a gabled, front ell. Its ornamental and formal features make it visually interesting. The ell, with its Palladian-like triple window, projects slightly on the right facade of the house. A bracketed cornice defines the lower edge of the side-gable roof and outlines the front gable of the ell, forming a strong triangular shape and emphasizing the geometry of the house. The entrance is in the side-gable section of the facade; at right a triple picture window has a molded arched transom with overlapping leaded arches within. Centered above the two triple windows is a double window in the second floor, decorated at the bottom with a flat Colonial-style how.

The front porch is supported with simple square columns above horizontal wood siding and is old if not original. Formstone has been applied to the facade below the line of the porch roof. The rest of the house is covered with faux-brick asphalt siding.

History: Like many of the surveyed properties, the Filer house was built in the late nineteenth century by a working-class family for their own habitation. The half-lot that would become 1508 1st Ave., 25' x 120', was purchased by John M. Filer of Altoona for \$335 on May 11, 1901--it was one of many left by John A. Wright to his heirs. Filer, a laborer, first paid taxes for the half-lot and house, valued at \$1,000, the following year. In 1905, directories show that Filer was a machinist living at this address. By 1919, he is listed here along with Ralph E. Filer, a member of the U.S. Army. John Filer and his wife, Martha S., sold this lot "with buildings erected" to Alfred and Katherine Winkler for \$4,300 on July 21, 1922. Katherine Winkler died on April 1, 1930, and Alfred, a machinist, remarried to Bertha Winkler soon after. Bertha Winkler's executors sold the property to Joseph C. Lansberry for \$4,000 on March 14, 1974. Lansberry also made his home here.

Sources: Maps: 1894, 1909. Deed books: 121/619, 121/616, 130/329, 298/140, 396/133-135, 958/345. City Directories. Tax assessment records.

Project Information: This report was part of a larger project to document the city of Altoona, Pennsylvania. The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), Robert Kapsch, chief, at the request of America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), Randy Cooley, director. Overviews of the history of the city (HABS No. PA-5784) and the fourth ward neighborhood (HABS No. PA-5786) provide context for these buildings as well as a comprehensive list of sources. See also additional HABS reports on buildings in the city and other neighborhoods.

This report was prepared by Susan Garfinkel in the summer of 1989 under the supervision of HABS senior historian Alison K. Hoagland and Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian. Garfinkel's and other project historians' work was published as Railroad City: Four Historic Neighborhoods in Altoona, Pennsylvania (Washington, D.C.: HABS/HAER, National Park Service, 1990), edited by Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian, and Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian.